

FOREWORD

Quite a number of articles in English, Hindi, Urdu and other languages about Islam and Muslims, particularly Indian Muslims, have of late been published in the periodicals and journals which evince interest in the problems currently faced by the Muslims of India, Islamic personal law, their culture and its role in the Indian society. A number of seminars and symposiums have also been held in certain major towns of the country in which the educated class has shown fairly keen interest. Some of the papers published or the speeches delivered on the subject exhibited a sympathetic approach to these problems while others took a hostile attitude, yet others were over-critical or even reproachful. Some of these were undoubtedly quite learned and thought-provoking but most of what was said or written in this connexion suffered, by and large, from lack of a true understanding of the point of view of the Muslims. Nevertheless, all these reveal an interest in the issues pertaining to the Muslims which had so long been either completely forgotten or were thought worthy of attention by the politicians alone.

To the writer of these lines, however, this signifies a gratifying change in attitude which ought to be taken advantage of by every well-wisher of the country who wants to face the facts squarely. He, therefore, hails this welcome sign but, at the same time, is of the view that the discussion on the subject should be more realistic, thoughtful and constructive. This undoubtedly depends on a deep study of Islam and appreciation of its spirit and the mind that it builds. It was with a view to help

in such an understanding of Islam that this brochure, which was earlier published in Urdu and circulated among the Muslims, is being brought out in English. It is also proposed to publish it in other Indian regional languages as well so that it may be made available to such educated non-Muslim friends who are interested in the well-being of their Muslim brethren. It is hoped that the brochure would receive their due attention.

This article has been compiled from a few speeches which were delivered by me in the gatherings of the Muslims on different occasions and at various places. The purpose of these addresses was to impress on the Muslims the distinctive features of their faith and culture, to create self-confidence in them, and to exhort them to rise against all those currents which aim at levelling down the distinguishing marks and characteristics of their religion and cultural heritage—for Muslims would hardly remain followers of Islam after giving up these characteristics. However, since this brochure contains a lucid explanation of the fundamental postulates of Islam and its view of life and the world, it would be found instructive by all those who want to understand Islam and its approach to life, its way of thinking and the temperament and inclination of the Muslims with an open mind. There is neither anything to be concealed nor is there any unhealthy trait for which one has to offer an apology. Islam is what it is : and everyone who wants to acquaint himself with what Islam stands for and why, would, I hope, find this slim volume helpful in his quest.

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ISLAM

—THE PERFECT RELIGION AND A WAY OF LIFE

The System of Belief and Culture

It is our firm belief that God sent His prophets as exalted teachers of humanity in order to guide mankind and to impart the knowledge about His essence and attributes ; for, these being beyond the ken of human senses and intellect, and without a parallel in this world, man could have never had these concepts by himself. God first illuminated the hearts of His messengers, the prophets, through His revelations and messages and then caused them to guide the humanity on the path of virtue—a way of life—in consonance with His Will and Pleasure.

“And it is not (the purpose of) Allah to let you know the Unseen. But Allah chooseth of his messengers whom He will, (to receive knowledge thereof).”

(*Ale-Imran : 179*)

There is indeed no way of gaining knowledge about the essence and attributes of God, the correct way of paying homage to Him and leading a life in accordance with His Will except through the guidance afforded by the prophets. Human imagination and intellect, experiences and aspirations, traditions and cultures can never attain this knowledge, since it can only be transmitted by the Creator and Benefactor of the Universe.

And, since this knowledge is delivered through the prophets of God only, they shall ever remain the fountain-heads of true faith and the gnosis of God, light and learning, ennobling conduct and virtuous behaviour; their way of life shall ever remain the righteous and the chosen path; and mankind shall have no choice but to follow these impeccable leaders of humanity for its own salvation and for achieving eternal happiness. God has specifically mentioned quite a good number of these elevated souls in the Qur'ān and enumerated the divine rewards conferred on them.

“That is our argument. We gave it unto Abraham against his folk. We raise unto degrees of wisdom whom We will. Lo ! thy Lord is Wise, Aware.

“And We bestowed upon him Issac and Jacob; each of them We guided; and Noah did We abide aforetime; and of his seed (We guided) David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward the good.

“And Zachariah and John and Jesus and Elias. Each one (of them) was of the righteous.

“And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. Each one (of them) did We prefer above (Our) creatures.

“With some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren; and We chose them and guided them unto a straight path.

“Such is the guidance of Allah wherewith He guideth whom He will of His bondmen. But if they had set up (for worship) aught beside Him, (all) that they did would have been in vain.

“Those are they unto whom We gave the Scripture and command and prophethood. But if these disbelieve therein, then indeed We shall entrust it to a people who will not be disbelievers therein.”

(*Al-Anam : 83-89*)

Mark the affection so lavishly showered on each of the prophets mentioned above. Thereafter God addresses each one of us through his beloved prophet Muhammad, on whom be the blessings and peace :

“Those are they whom Allah guideth to follow their guidance. Say (O Muhammad unto mankind) : I ask of you no fee for it. Lo ! it is naught but a Reminder to (His) creatures.” (*Al-Anam : 90*)

These are thus the adorable teachers of humanity, the devoted apostles of the Living, Loving One God. Their creed and convictions, manner and morals, conduct and demeanour, in short, the view of life and the world emanates from their complete and unflinching submission to the Lord of the world. And this is what we call “Islam” to distinguish it from the other way of life, known as ‘Ignorance’ and based on a defiant rejection of the way of these prophets.

The Era of Abraham

Abraham, who earned the title of the friend of God, was chosen to be the leader and guide of humanity as well as the progenitor of the later prophets.

“Allah (Himself) chose Abraham for friend.”

(*Al-Nisa : 125*)

“Lo ! I have appointed thee a leader of mankind.

(*Al-Baqarah : 124*)

Describing the exalted position to which Abraham was raised and made a model in religion and piety for all the unitarians, the Qur'ān asks the faithful to follow his lead.

"Verily Abraham was a pattern, devout unto Allah, Upright, and was not of the associaters. Thankful for His bounties ; He chose him and He guided him unto a straight path.

"And We gave him good in the world, and in the Hereafter ; he is among the righteous :

"And Afterward We inspired thee (Muhammad, saying) : Follow the religion of Abraham, as one by nature upright. He was not of the idolaters."

(An-Nahl : 120-3)

Ever since the Truth was revealed to Abraham, he continues to be the leader of mankind, and shall continue to be so till the Day of Judgement. The last prophet sent to mankind during this era of Abraham was Muhammad, and the people raised to hold the banner of Abraham aloft are the Muslims. The holy Qur'ān makes it clear in unambiguous terms :

"He hath chosen you and hath not laid upon you in religion any hardship ; the faith of your father Abraham (is yours). He hath named you Muslims..."

(Al-Hajj : 78)

The distinguishing feature of the leadership of Abraham and his call consists of the Unity of Godhead, unalloyed and free from all traces of paganism, animism, pantheism and dualism. It rejects even the slightest trace of polytheistic cult as unsanctified and graceless. It strictly follows in the footstep of Abraham who

addressed thus the idolaters of his time :

“Lo ! We are guiltless of you and all that ye worship beside Allah. We have done with you. And there hath arisen between us and you hostility and hate for ever till ye believe in Allah only.”

(*Al-Mumtahanah* : 4)

And, then, Abraham beseeched God for his progeny in these words :

“My Lord ! Make safe this territory, and preserve me and my sons from serving idols.”

(*Ibrahim* : 35)

The Prophethood of Muhammad

The last and the greatest prophet to mark the consummation of the message meant for the era of Abraham was Muhammad, the last Prophet, who was brought forth in the progeny of Abraham in the same country, nay, the same city of Mecca where the first house of God was erected by Abraham as the centre of worship to One and the Only Lord of the world. The call of Abraham was clarified, refined and perfected and disseminated to the four quarters of the Globe by the last Prophet of God. It was thus that the prophethood finally came to an end with the universal message of the last Prophet, and the favour and bounty of God completed on mankind. Now this last Prophet is the only model, guide and pattern for leading a righteous life in this world and winning salvation in the world-to-come.

About three months prior to his death, the revelation made at Arafat to the Prophet Muhammad declared :

“This day have I perfected your religion for you

and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM."

(Al-Maida : 3)

Acceptance of Muhammad's creed and religion, his way of life, and the code of conduct and comport laid down by him is now necessary not only for expressing one's gratitude and love for God but also for attaining a sublimity which is the pinnacle of piety and propinquity to God Almighty.

"Say, (O Muhammad, to mankind) : If you love Allah, follow me ; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

(Ale-Imran : 31)

Shariah and the Abrahamic Culture

For the divine approbation and guidance now depends on following the course chalked out by Muhammad, the era of his leadership and that of his patriarch, Abraham, extends to the present times. In creed and faith, devotion and worship, behaviour and morals, culture and the way of life, the concepts, practices and teachings of the last prophet, humanity can find the way acceptable to God. The approval of the last Prophet of God was sealed with the Divine favour ; and to whatever he showed his inclination and aptitude, that was crowned with the propensity of upright nature. Whatever he practised was approved as a meritorious act for the pious and devoted souls and the practice was lovingly named as the "Sunnah" or the natural inclination of human beings. Man has two hands—both created by the same God—but the right one has a preference over the left in

beginning an act considered as virtuous. This is so simply because the apostles of God preferred to do so and hence it became a distinguishing mark of the way of life adopted by Muhammad and Abraham. Take any other custom, usage or practice classified as permissible, meritorious or in keeping with the Islamic norms and you would find it to have been approved and practised by the Prophets of God.

This is but one minor example to elucidate the point. The way of Abraham and the culture based on it, is a separate and distinct culture in its own right. Its characteristics and features, norms and values, are singularly different from the traits of all other cultures. Voluminous treatises have been written on it but here I shall delineate only two of its distinctive features which can be observed at any place.

All the civilized people are given to bathing and putting on immaculate dress. Islamic culture too gives equal importance to what it calls cleanliness. But there is something else known as purification which is quite distinct from the former. So far as I know the concept of purification is peculiar to the Islamic—Abrahamic way of life. It is rather singularly sensitive about the purification of person and dress than any other known culture of the world. It is something more than mere cleanliness of the person and dress of an individual. Howsoever immaculate and spotless dress one may be putting on but the least defilement without a taint or stain on the dress or person would render the prayer ineffective unless that impurity is removed. The same concept holds good for the utensils, beds, furniture, etc. in daily use of a

Muslim. In fine, Islam does not remain content with cleanliness alone, but goes further to draw a distinction between it and purification. This is but one distinguishing feature of the Islamic way of life.

Take another example by way of illustration. The Abrahamic-Islamic culture has a code different from others for consumption of animal flesh. It draws a line between edibles which are forbidden and permissible, clean and unclean, creatures that have died and those that have been sacrificed. It absolutely forbids several categories of animals which are, by and large, disliked by man. Even the permissible animals should not have died a natural death but slaughtered in the name of Allah. This is another aspect of Islamic-Abrahamic culture laying down specific injunctions in regard to clean and permissible diet. Unlike other man-made laws based on human wisdom, experience or custom and hence alterable, these injunctions, whether they be for individual code of conduct or for social behaviour, are basically revealed laws and hence eternal. This scheme of divine legislation leaves sufficient room for adjustments and adaptations to meet the ever-changing needs of the human beings, within the framework of its general principles, values and ideals.

Enduring Leadership and Universal Call

Abraham was chosen by God to stand at the head of a great religious movement with a universal call. His offspring was rewarded with prophethood and leadership of the mankind and appointed to invite the humanity to surrender itself to Allah. It is a responsibility, then,

devolving on his entire progeny and also on those who associate themselves with his call to strive and struggle for the truth, fight falsehood, invite the people to submit to God and work for it unceasingly till the ship of humanity finds a safe anchorage. It is their sacred duty to carry the torch of Divine guidance. This is, indeed, the fundamental constructive factor still at work to save the world from eternal doom and to guide the humanity to find its way to a bright future. Our call should, then, be the same everlasting message of Abraham which carries the pledge of Divine approval.

“And he made it a word enduring among his seed, that haply they might return.”

(Az-Zukhruf : 28)

Belief in One and the only God as the sole and unassisted author of creation, free from all traces of idols and associates, is the fundamental principle, the fount and cornerstone of the message of Abraham and Muhammad. This call to belief in the unity of God displays no forbearance of the polytheists or the worshippers of forms and symbols. In the words of the Qur’ān, it calls upon the people to :—

“So shun the filth of idols and shun lying speech;

Turning unto Allah (only), not ascribing partners unto Him.....”

(Al-Hajj : 30-31)

The wisdom of this message is clear : it purifies the soul from the evil of covetousness, love of the world, and its vile trappings, crass materialism and the lust for power and position. Its guiding principle has ever been

that :

"As for the Abode of the Hereafter We assign it unto those who seek not oppression in the earth, nor yet corruption. The sequel is for those who ward off (evil)."

(*Al-Qassas : 83*)

This message discriminates neither between man and man, nor does it favour any particular nation, race or language. It brooks no aggression at all nor does it tolerate partiality towards any faction, class, colour, creed, language or culture. Feeling of hatred, disrespect for life, barbarism and brutality are regarded by it as the relics of pagan past.

"When those who disbelieve had set up in their hearts zealotry, the zealotry of the Age of ignorance....."

(*Al-Fatah : 26*)

The Prophet of Islam warned his followers : Do not turn into disbelievers after me and begin not killing one another." He also declared : "You all are the progeny of Adam and Adam was created from dust. No Arab has any preference over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab except one who is most God-fearing."

"O mankind ! Lo ! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo ! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo ! Allah is Knower, Aware."

(*Al-Huzurat :13*)

The last Prophet of God warned : "Whoever gave a call for partisanship is not one of us, whoever fought for

partisanship is not one of us and whoever died for partisanship is not one of us." Once when certain people tried to rally the people round to their support in the name of Ansars and Mahajirs, the Prophet said, "Leave it, this is disgraceful."

The core of this message consists of the Unity of Godhead ; from it stems the respect for humanity in social life ; it paves the way for humility and fear of God in morality ; salvation in the Hereafter becomes the object of all its endeavour, struggle and sacrifice ; clemency coupled with valour is its battle-cry ; guidance and common weal get preference over pecuniary interests in its administration ; service rather than overlordship and benefaction rather than exploitation become the hall-mark of its rule. The selfless service it has rendered to humanity and the way it has protected mankind from the onslaught of ignorance and disruptive forces in its heyday of its glory is a distinction that history never witnessed again. The remnants of its glorious past can still be seen fostering the welfare of humanity.

Unity in Diversity

We undoubtedly love and revere the land in which we are born, and Islam neither denies this natural instinct in man or tries to suppress it. With regard to this, affinity of man with his abode—hinted at in the Quranic verse saying *We have made you nations*—one might be Burmese, Indian, Turk or else a Saiyid, a Moghul, or a Pathan but from the view-point of what we believe in, the norms of morality we adhere to and the mental and intellectual faculties we possess, we shall all remain

followers of Abraham, Muhammad and Islam.

And these Abrahamic and Muhammadan characteristics in us must also find expression. We must vouch for our singular characteristics, the mental, intellectual and spiritual traits we have inherited as Muslims—as the followers of Abraham are Muhammad—no matter whether we reside in India or Pakistan or Indonesia or China or Morocco. We are all members of one family, peculiar and strange though it may seem ; since, our culture and code of life is one despite outward differences in language, race and colour.

We might put on different dresses : the Indian Muslim may don a *sherwani*, a costume not necessarily worn by Muslims in other countries ; for, neither Islam nor the Prophets of yore prescribed any particular dress. We actually witness a wide diversity in the dresses of Muslims in any international gathering but by no means this signifies any difference in their culture. Islam permits this diversity provided the limits prescribed in this regard are not overstepped.

Essence of Prophetic Culture

The limits laid down for a temperate and ethical way of life constitute, in truth and reality, the essence of prophetic culture. These limits, broad and practicable, are easily applicable from one end of the world to another. They permit sufficient mobility—a wide sphere of freedom—to anyone endowed with upright nature to pattern his life within these bounds. Take for instance the limits in regard to the dress of males : men are prohibited to wear dresses made of silk and are enjoined to

avoid nakedness as well as prodigality ; the trousers or the dress to cover the lower part of the body should neither cover the ankles nor leave the knees bare ; these should not be flaunty, funny or shameful. Within these broad confines all the different types of dresses can unite to observe the requirements of Islamic injunctions in regard to the mode of attires and dresses.

Another marked example of cultural affinity furnished by the observance of these limits is the habit of taking food by the Muslims with their right hand. Whether it be Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, India or any other country, the Muslims take food, or for that matter, always start their work with the right hand unless it is convenient or natural to use the left one. This is done to emulate the prophets. There are similar peripheral injunctions, laid down by the prophets of God, which constitute the guiding precepts of the Islamic way of life. These commands pertain to different spheres, the family and social life, dresses and dietary habits, etc. leaving us free to pattern our affairs or to adopt whatever we like within these limits. Alongwith it one is forbidden to deride or ridicule the dress, diet, language or culture of another person. The commandment of God declares in no uncertain words :

“O ye who believe ! Let not a folk deride a folk who may be better than they (are), nor let women (deride) women who may be better than they are : neither defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames.”

(Al-Hujurat : 11)

Patriotism is not against Islamic Culture

We have not only to shoulder the responsibilities devolving on us for the development of the country, but vie with one another to make the country great and prosperous. We have to apply our capabilities to this task with truthfulness, sincerity, courage and with a sense of dedication to the duty that should earn for us an honoured place in the country.

We should also give our full attention to the learning and developing of the different languages of our country. We should rather excel others in the literary endeavour and produce works of outstanding merit and distinction in every language.

We might adopt, read or write any language of our choice. The only demand of the Abrahamic way of life is that we should not propagate falsehood. Whatever script we may adopt, whether beginning from the right or left there is no bar to it in Islam, but our composition must have the ideals of justice and fairplay in its view and reject all that which is evil and false, immoral and demonical. Everything written in Persian or Arabic script is sinful if it encourages cruelty, dissension and disrespect of humanity ; but whatever is written in English or Hindi script to uphold truth and justice shall be virtuous and commendable in the eyes of God.

Arabic and other Languages

There is no denying the fact that Arabic is the language in which the sacred Scripture of Islam was revealed, the prayer can be offered in that language only and its study is essential for gaining the knowledge

of *Shariah*, the code of conduct prescribed by Islam. Barring these distinctive features of Arabic, every language has an equal status. It is, however, a different matter that a few Semitic and Aryan languages, which adopted the scripts beginning from the right hand, have had an opportunity to produce and conserve a vast treasure of Islamic thought and literature due to their long association with the latter. It is only on this account that we want to preserve these languages and also want our later generation to protect and enrich this treasure. We do want to preserve and develop Urdu in India for our posterity, but this in no way clashes with the privileged place enjoyed by other languages. We may learn any language or write in any script, Islam simply demands that our literary compositions should not encourage falsehood and hatred, deceit and deception. This is all that the code of conduct promulgated by Abraham and Muhammad demands of you: the ethical tenor of this creed, its chief characteristic, is what it wants to make the distinguishing feature of your life.

The Indian Muslims

India is the cradle of numerous creeds and cultures, philosophies and schools of thought and many of these are still flourishing here. In this land of varied cultures and languages, Indian Muslims are the custodians of the prophetic culture propagated by Abraham and Muhammad. This is, in reality, the purpose of the existence of Muslims in this country and therein too, lies the secret of their success and prosperity.

The dominant culture and religion of India have, in

the past, absorbed several other creeds and left no trace of their distinctive features and characteristics. If Islam has been able to hold its own in India for such a long time, it is only because of the fact that it has so far maintained intimate connections with the Abrahamic way of life and never, for a moment, cut itself adrift from its fundamental creed of the Unity of Godhead and prophethood. It is absolutely essential, even now, to stick to its centre of gravity and uphold this line of demarcation.

Abrahamic Culture—A Common Heritage

The Muslims of Indo-Pak sub-continent, Malaya or Afghanistan are as much inheritors of the creed and culture propagated by the prophets of Allah, Abraham and Muhammad, as the Quraishites of Egypt and Arabia, Zaidis of Yaman, Hasanis of Morocco and the Hazaris of Java and Sumatra. Any neo-convert who has maintained the spiritual, moral and cultural affinities with the last Prophet of God is definitely preferable to one who might be a Hashamite claiming his descent from Muhammad but not his spiritual heir. Iqbal expressed the same truth in these lines :

“Senussi said one day to Sharif of Mecca, quite unfeigned,

‘Hijazi thou art, in lineage and name, but not in heart.’ ”

An Indian Muslim proud of his Islamic heritage is thus better than an Arab who eulogises Abu Jahal and Abu Lahab as his forefathers. Iqbal, who came from a converted Brahmin family addressed a Saiyid, claiming

his descent from the Prophet of Islam saying :

"I come of the stock, heathens and idolaters ;
 Idol-worship was the stem of my ancestors.
 A descendant of the Prophet thou art,
 As for me, Brahminism is my denominator !
 Religion—a lodestar in the path of life ;
 Religion of Abraham and Muhammad—a pathfinder.
 Take to thy heart what Muhammad hath said,
 O son of Ali, under the spell of Avicenna how long
 wilt thou fetter ?"

The Fleeting Links

All the links and kinships of this mortal, material world shall ultimately melt away. There shall neither remain a Hashamite nor an Arab, nor an Indian nor yet an Indonesian : only God is eternal, immortal. The man-made differences of families, races and nationalities shall vanish one day, then our sincerity for the religion of God, the way of Abraham and Muhammad shall only be left behind ; for, that alone is valued by God and destined to remain for ever. Iqbal said in a couplet :

"One who upholds colour and race, shall go down
 at last,
 A blue-blooded Arab or a royal Turk, whatever be
 his caste."

Our Decision

We, the Muslims of India, have firmly decided that we shall not foresake our motherland and no power on earth except God, can change our resolve. We have reached this decision neither as a matter of expediency

nor owing to any helplessness or weakness. On the contrary, our decision reflects our firm resolve reached after giving full thought to the matter.

Our another decision, not a whit less important or less courageous is that we shall live in our motherland as Muslims, upholding our distinctive creed and culture, our religious precepts, observances and way of life. We are not prepared and shall never give up the smallest portion of our Faith, cost what may.

And, as citizens of this country we have a right to live in this land of ours with complete freedom and self-respect. The constitution of India and the democratic and secular ideals adopted by us guarantee these rights to us. It is absolutely wrong and a misconception if someone thinks that we would ever agree to live in this country at the cost of our faith and traditions, language and culture ; for, the country would then not be a motherland but a vast prison for the entire community—where it would be condemned to a life of indignity and humiliation. We are undoubtedly children of this land and we are second to none in our love and respect for it but we subscribe, at the same time, to the Abrahamic view of life and the world. And whatever be the land of birth and the nationality of a Muslim, he cannot foresake his Abrahamic culture. Thus, let there be no doubt that we want to live in this land as free and respectable citizens of a free country, demanding our due share and shouldering our responsibilities in the administration and development of our motherland. There is absolutely no question of our being second-rate citizens. Freedom and dignity are the two inalienable rights of men ;

guaranteed by human, moral and legal values of the civilized society, and their denial to a people has never produced a happy result.

Life and Death—Both on Islam

The Lord and Creator of the world has ordained that Muslims should pattern their life according to the precepts of Islam, and when they die, their death too should be on the same faith.

“.....And die not save as those who have surrendered (unto Him).”

(*Ale-Imran : 132*)

In their last will to their children the two revered prophets of yore, Abraham and Jacob, enjoined the same upon their sons :

“The same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons, and also Jacob, (saying) : O my sons ! Lo ! Allah hath chosen for you the (true) religion ; therefore die not save as men who have surrendered (unto Him).”

(*Al-Baqarah : 132*)

The Islamic code of conduct, the *Shariah*, has worked out elaborate instructions to provide for such conditions, surroundings and circumstances which always remind a Muslim, from his birth to death, that he subscribes to the faith of Abraham and Muhammad, demanding absolute surrender to the will of One and the Only God. His faith makes him conscious of the fact that he also belongs to a distinct and separate order of the people, an *ummah*. The first call that a Muslim hears after birth is the call to prayer ; he is then given an

Islamic name, the preference being given to a name expressing submission or surrender to or praise of God; he is called upon to undergo rites signifying Abrahamic traditions; and, when he dies others pray for his salvation and the salvation of all the Muslims. The prayer offered is :

"O Allah ! he to whom Thou accorded life, cause him to live in the observation of Islam, and he to whom Thou givest death, cause him to die in the state of Faith, the *Iman*."

And, then, while laying him at rest in his last abode, the same wish finds expression in these words :

"In the name of Allah and on the religion and way of the Prophet of Allah."

The purpose behind all these rites and observances is that we are reminded at every turn and pass, nay, several times every day that we belong to the folk of Abraham and Muhammad; our way of life and the code of conduct are quite distinct and separate from those of others—we have submitted to the Lord, Sustainer and Creator of the world; our success lies in following His guidance and His commands in all walks of life and, therefore, the end of our life is to merit the pleasure of Allah and to pattern the life of our progeny to tread the same RIGHT PATH.

It is our bounden duty today to disseminate this message of the prophets, the call of Muhammad and Abraham, in all its details. The domain of this call extends to the entire gamut of life—prescribing a definite way of life—which was begun by Abraham and consummated in the teachings and the person of Muhammad,

blessed be they. This way of life is based on a unique approach to life with a definite and well-defined code of conduct for the individual as well as collective life of the community ; maintaining a balance between the two and allowing full freedom to the individual to develop and prosper. The delicate but exquisite edifice of this culture owes its existence to a precise faith with its clear-cut principles and postulates, obligations and observances, all of which constitute the sacred trust and valuable inheritance vouchsafed to us by Abraham and Muhammad. Nothing else is acceptable to God, hallowed be His name.

The Delicate Trust

Muslims are today faced with a trial which wants to feel the pulse of their faith and test their intelligence and determination. We have to demonstrate that we have the capacity and ability to pattern our life and live in accordance with the demands of our Faith. Wherever we might live, it is our duty to own and accept the peculiar characteristics of that land. We should learn the language of the country, co-operate and obtain our due share in its administration but we should also be, at the same time, Muslims, the missionaries of One True God. We would undoubtedly be called upon by God to explain why the message of the prophets, the call of Abraham and Muhammad, remained restricted within the community and why it was not diffused among the rest of the humanity ?

Do Not Emulate the Jews

God has narrated an incident of the Children of

Israel as an admonition for the Muslims. The Qur'an says :

"And We brought the Children of Israel across the sea, and they came unto a people who were given up to idols which they had. They said : O Moses ! Make for us a god even as they have gods. He said :

"Lo ! ye are a folk who know not.

"Lo ! As for these, their way will be destroyed and all that they are doing is in vain.

"He said : Shall I seek for you a god other than Allah when He hath favoured you above (all) creatures ?"

(*Al-Araf : 138-40*)

The Children of Israel had been given instructions about the essence and attributes of God through their Prophet Moses. The supreme truth that God alone is the Master, Sovereign and Deity, save Whom none is worthy of praise and worship, and that His command alone constitutes the law of the Cosmos was made known to them. But when these ignorant folk saw some idol worshippers, they were so enamoured by the tangible objects of worship that they expressed the desire to have similar representations of their own Deity. These ignoramuses thought that with the object of worship before their eyes their devotion and zealous attachment to the object of worship would find new and colourful channels of expression. Hence their request : "O Moses ! Make for us a god even as they have gods."

The Prophet of God and the greatest monotheist of his time rightly felt indignant on such a request and he

replied, "Lo ! ye are a folk who know not." He knew that his people were witless, empty-headed folk ignorant of the vain efforts of "idol-worshippers. He therefore, warned his people saying, "Lo ! as for these, their way will be destroyed and all that they are doing is in vain." Appealing to the good sense of his people Moses added : "Shall I seek for you a god other than Allah when He hath favoured you above (all) creatures ?" What Moses wanted to emphasise was that God saved them from the tyranny of Pharaoh and honoured them as a people chosen to bear the message of His Unity and Sovereignty but they still wanted an inferior, feeble and impotent god to be brought before them.

Eternal Struggle

One of the distinctive characteristics of Abraham's progeny is that wherever they might happen to be present, they would always stake their lives for Truth and Justice, give the call of Unity of God and summon mankind towards the path of God—the way of righteousness and salvation. This is their destiny and the end of their life till the Doomsday. Whoever is holding aloft this banner of Allah, he would undoubtedly be found to be related in one way or the other with Abraham and the last Prophet of God, Muhammad, on whom be peace.

The world has been through many bloody conflicts. It has witnessed two devastating wars in the recent past which brought unprecedented death and destruction to the mankind but none of these was waged by the folk of Abraham, nor, were they a party to it. It was a strife for securing markets and material goods, power and

pelf. Quite unlike these folk fighting for the golden calf of this world, you would find that whosoever is directing his energies to propagate and diffuse the message of the prophets of God, is an offspring or a spiritual heir to Abraham and Muhammad. They would continue to proclaim the Unity of God, faith in His sovereignty and overlordship, and retribution on the Day of Judgement till this world exists. This task having been finally entrusted to the progeny of Abraham, you would find someone at every place and in every age, struggling to call the humanity back to the path of peace and salvation. Iqbal epitomised this spirit of struggle in these lines :

"Burning his lamp, defying the roaring wind ;
There sits the mendicant endowed with the vanity
of kings."

A Guidebook for Muslims

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Translation : Mohiuddin Ahmad

All those who are interested in the problems confronting the *Ummah*, and who keep an eye on the right and wrong influences exerted on it are aware of the need of the community in regard to a concise manual, a guidebook which may help them in the practical consequences of living up to their duties to God and fellow human beings—in devotion and morals alike.

The need for such a work has increased in the present times when the people want more concise books than those written earlier for they seldom have time to go through books requiring labour and stamina.

These pages describe the peculiar traits and distinguishing features of Islam, its basic need, permissible behaviours, the sayings and doings of the holy Prophet, his zeal for service to God and spreading His message, fighting in the way of God, virtuous demeanour demanded by the Quran and the *sunnah* and the character and manners of the Prophet, albeit briefly, along with Quranic verses sounding a warning against the ruses of Satan and human weaknesses, for the training and guidance of those who can, by acting on these precepts, set an example for others.

The author who is a well-known scholar of Islam, has given in these pages a digest of his studies and experiences that he has gained through his contact with different sections of the people which have gone to make it a guidebook for those who want to learn how to live as a Muslim.



Islam and Civilization

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Translation : Mohiuddin Ahmad

The influence Islam has exerted on civilization covers an immense area in time and space, from the first century of the Islamic era to this day and from one corner of the world to the other. In its immanence it encompasses from creed to morals and behaviour, individual as well as social, and is linked with diverse phenomena of life like law, politics, international relations, arts, letters, poetics, architecture, cultural refinement etc. Although well-nigh impossible to cover such a wide spectrum of human activity the author has made an attempt to describe the role Islam has played in the making of civilization in such fields as the effect of faith in Oneness of God, concept of human unity, equality and dignity, the position of women, unification of spirit and matter, intellectual pursuit in religious matters, promotion of morality and justice etc. [Demi 8 vo., paperback, pp. 94, price Rs. 18.00]



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